

## TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch  
President and CEO

Human Services Committee Public Hearing  
**February 14, 2023**

### **SB 412 AN ACT INCREASING MEDICAID RATES FOR COMPLEX CARE NURSING SERVICES.**

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrist and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch. I am the President and CEO at the CT Association for Healthcare at Home, the united voice for the DPH-licensed home health care agencies.

I am here today to support committee bill SB 412 to increase Adult Complex Care Nursing Rates in Home Health. On behalf of our Complex Care Nursing providers in CT and the Association, I'd also like to thank Senator Berthel for raising the concept and to the committee as a whole for raising the bill. In addition to the Adult rate increase outlined in this bill, we ask for some language edits in the bill as the rates should not be aligned with Medicaid skilled nursing home rates which are per day rates; whereas, in-home complex care rates are hourly rates based on per patient served by a home health care agency, not a nursing home.

Currently, just three home health care agencies provide the majority of this level of care in CT. Their collective census of complex care cases is 243, with 61% aged 0-18 and 39% aged 19 and over. The numbers are not large and are even smaller than the over 300 they cared for prior to the pandemic. However, low reimbursement rates forced a significant decline in the number of patients and staff available to care for them.

In 2021, these providers received some much-needed rate relief when ARPA dollars providing a significant increase to their Pediatric (aged 0-18) Complex Care Rate, yet only a minimum increase for the Adult Complex Care Rate. The result is a 21% difference or \$12.67 more per hour for an RN and \$10.72 more per hour for an LPN. While we are extremely thankful to DSS for hearing our need to increase the Medicaid rates for this level of care, they somehow only heard the urgency and dire need for the Pediatric rate. Yet, 39% of the Complex Care patients currently served are over 18.



This doesn't make sense as the patients' needs are the same if not more complex as a human body ages. You will hear from many testifiers today about the specifics along with poignant examples of the type of care they provide to this population regardless of their ages. Please consider their testimony carefully.

Of note, **Connecticut is the only state who pays a different rate for children vs adults.** It's a message that is quite unsettling and discriminatory. As mentioned, these Adult Complex Care patients (trachs, respirators, suctioning, nebulizer treatments, oxygen, tube feedings, many wheelchair bound) need the same level of care if not more care as they age. The care at home is ICU level care.

Moreover, agencies cannot pay nurses at one rate to care for children and another rate to pay for similar care for adults. Again, it doesn't make sense and it sends a message the state should not be sending. The providers are being forced to refuse adult complex care cases which is impacting access to care. And, unfortunately, Connecticut does not have adequate residential facilities for adults with these care needs. Many must seek care outside CT at an average rate of \$2900 per day.

**We estimate there are just under 250 patients currently receiving complex care in CT. Roughly 40% are over age eighteen. Should the adult rate be the same as pediatric rate, we estimate the annual cost of their care would be \$40M at home and \$100M in a facility. At-home complex care nursing saves CT \$60M per year. To avoid the higher cost of facility care and ensure these savings, we are asking for an additional investment in the adult complex care Medicaid budget of \$3M.**

We urge you to right this error and bring parity to the rates, so our adults continue to receive care in their homes with their families.

Thank you,

Tracy Wodatch

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